

THE Primitive Christians

Bearing their Testimony for God in Times of PERSECUTION:

BEING

Some Sentences of *Tertullian* and others, taken out of a Book, called, *The Mirrour of the Martyrs*: How that the Crimes which of Old were objected against the *Christians*, were, That they frequented *Seditious Meetings and Conventicles*, and that they would Rebel against their *Superiours*: And the Judges and Justices grew incens'd against them, and would not hear their just Pleas; therefore *Tertullian* complained, saying:

THUS are our Adversarys affected towards us, that they condemn our cause before it be heard; which if it were equally heard, could not be condemned by them: But is there any thing more unjust, then to hate that which is not known, seeing then Men hate what they know not, why should it not be granted us to follow that we know, and being known could not be so maligned as it is? It is not permitted to *Christians* to have their cause publicly heard, wherein (he said) their Blindness appeared that accused us as Evil-doers, but the cause of Malefactors is heard, sifted and pleaded, only to *Christians* it is denied, not being suffered to utter that which would make their cause understood, nor to defend the Truth, which hinders the Judge from shewing himself just. But seeing the truth condemns that, which Men impose upon us their last refuge is (see Tertu.) to blear our Eyes with the Authority of their Laws, which say they, *must not be repealed*, (saith he) As touching the Law they speak of, may not Men fail in framing Laws, and therefore correct and repeal what they have Enacted? doth not experience dayly manifest so much that ancient Laws are abrogated by Enacting of new? Thence it follows (saith he) that neither length of time, nor Authority of the Law makes Laws to be good, but only such as are grounded upon Justice and Equity; justly then (saith he) may that Law be suspected for bad, if it will not suffer it self to be tryed; and is unjust, if not being examined, it yet takes place.

As for *Antiquity*, against which you tell us we *Christians* transgress, as there was a complaint against the *Christians*, That such *Rhastical singularity* was amongst them, that those things which their Elders had received and allowed, they rejected and disallowed, devising every man such Laws as they thought good, and observe the Same, Assembling together great multitudes of people. "Saith *Tertullian* you make *Antiquity* your God, and yet you yourselves from day to day live as you list holding that fast which you ought to forgo, forsaking that which you ought to retain. And as for those Crimes that were Objected Against them, that they did frequent *Seditious Meetings and Conventicles*, and that they would rebell against their Superiors, and that their Assemblies were unseemly in secret. And they reflected upon them as to their Poverty, And that they offended the Majesty of Princes because they did not give them honours which were vaine flatterings or rash; And therefore they Accounted

them as unfit members of their common wealth, being Angry with them because their number Increased, upbrading the Christians, saying, now we shall have every Age, Sex and condition and estate take unto them the title of a Christian, and they grew so angry that the Emperour was fired up, who did Appear somewhat favourable to the Christians a while, but afterward Altered and sent forth so terrible an Edict that according to the forewarning of the Lord the Elect (if it had been possible) might have been Subverted; And upon this Edict (see Ter.) Came such fear over us all, that many there were especially of the Richer sort came running and some were drawn by their neighbours being Cited by name to their Idollitrous worship: and other some came shaking and trembling as men not which should do sacrifice, but that should be sacrificed themselves (being smote by the witness of the Lord in their hearts, for so doing) the multitude laughing them to scorn; And others Came boldly with a lie in their Mouthes, declaring that they never were of that profession, of whom it was said that they should hardly ever be saved; of the Residue some followed one part, some another, some ran away and some were taken, of whom certaine continued to bands and torments constant; others again after long imprisonment before they should come before the Judge Renounced their faith, some also after they had suffered torments, yet after revolted but others being as strong as blessed & valient pillars of the Lord, fortified with constancy, Agreeing to their faith, were made faithfull Martyrs of the Kingdom of God.

And *Arnobius* saith, that in less then 30 days were Martyred in divers provinces about 20000 Persons, Chiefly because of their Assemblies. And the Emperour *Valerianus* put forth a Proclamation forbidding the Meetings of the Christians: And commanded all good Christians to be banisht out of the Land, whereof there were exceeding many, yet it is said those that did remaine met in troops, which the Emperour hearing sent for the Provost, and struck him for not quite ridding the Country of them, and gave him a strict order, *To go to their Assemblies and put them all to the Sword.* So the Provost went at the time and place where the Christians Assembled (sending to the Christians secretly to give them notice Aforehand that they might forbear meeting, being loath to Execute such a bloody command, but the Christians were so far from forsaking the Assembling themselves together (although it was at such a perilous time) that they came flocking from all parts, fearing lest their brethren should suffer without them, amongst the rest a woman posted very fast through the soldiers, with her Little Child in her Armes, which the Provost perceiving spake to her saying, *Woman whither passest thou so fast? I am going said the woman to the place where the multitude of Christians meet: But knowest thou not* (said the Provost) *that I am to put them all to the Sword? I know it well* (said the woman) *which makes me post thitherward so fast, that I may also peritake with them of their Martyredom:* which the Provost perceiving their zeal to God and Love one to another could not be broken, Like a wise and modest man, in whom tenderness had taken place, gave over, and went to the Emperour, relating the matter, saying to him, *take Away my life, thou mayest; but to Execute thy Commands herein, I dare not.* And the Lord so ordered it, by this means the Emperour's wrath was appeased, and the Christians had their Liberty.

And as for the Objections against the Christian Meetings, as aforesaid, they Answered, our Religion or religious exercises are neither hidden nor unknown, Albeit (said they) we have neither Temples nor Altars, we worship our God in spirit, we adore him in our hearts, our care is to exercise our selves in innocency, Justice and continuall Supplications; we fly and abhor wickedness and these are our sacrifices we are sufficiently known to our selves, and the badge whereby we are Known each to other is Innocency and modesty, thus we Love one another and know not what it is to hate, thus we acknowledge our selves brethren, the Children of one Father, followers together of the same Faith, and Inheriters of the same hope. In our meetings we Affect neither Ambition nor vain Glory; But when we meet it is to call upon God with one heart in our Prayers we pray for Princes and those that govern under them, for principalities, for Kingdoms that in all things tranquillity may be Injoyed.

Our

Our Meetings are for the nourishing of our Faith by holy Admonitions for the Increase of our hope, to Confirm us yet more therein to teach and Learn the Doctrine of Gods Commandments; we use exhortations, correction with divine sentences, if any man have failed that they be excluded from the unity of our Assemblies; there are Approved Elders to reprove and Admonish &c. All who are of Ability contribute something monthly or when they will, for none are constrained, this so gathered is kept for the Churches stock, for we Lavish forth nothing thereof upon merry Meetings, but the whole is Employed for the Cherishing the Poor and needy, for the buriall of the Dead, for maintaining of Poor Orphans, to breed schollars with, to relieve the Aged that are Impotent. And is bestowed upon those who are in Prison, for maintaining the Truth of God.

Ought these Assemblies of Christians (said Ter.) to be stiled a Conventicle? in which none have cause to complain? do we ever come together to wrong any? this title of a factious meeting (saith he) Appertaines to those that conspire against the Godly, who shed Innocent Blood; And notwithstanding be sure your rigour shall increase our number. And as for our patient suffering, which you term obstinacy, shall sufficiently declare that the Cause for which we suffer is so condemned by man that in the mean time it is approved of God. And although Persecution Increase, yet still our number Increased, which shewed (said Tertu.) that they which moved them so to do was not Justly weighed of them which found fault with them. O ye Judges or Justices (then said he) who glory in killing of the Christians, condemn and crush us to pieces, for seeing our God suffers us to be thus evil entreated, your Injustice shall set forth our Innocency; and be it known (said they) that God doth not condemn us for our sufferings, nor is he unable to relieve us, but Gods true souldier is not forsaken though he suffer; nor in dying perishes, or is overcome. And that nothing can terrifie or remove us which believe, by this it daily appeareth, for when we are persecuted, put into prison, banished, &c: yet we go not from our confession, but on the contrary the more cruelty is wrought against us, the more be they that come to piety and faith by the Name of Jesus.

Moreover, How should we Rebel against our Superiors, seeing we patiently suffer the wrongs offered us on all Hands? How oft have the mad Multitude invaded us? only by their own Authority, assailing us, now with Fire, then with Stones. And not only the Blind Multitude rejoyce at the Cruelties which are exercised against us, but even the Principal in Authority, who rule over them; but where is the Vengeance that hath been taken by us for all this? God forbid (said they) that a little Fire kindled by Men should take Vengeance, for the contempt of the Doctrine of God. Alas! do you think (said they) that Multitudes of Men are wanting to us? Strange Nations that War against you have their Territories limited; but we Christians are dispersed your Citys, Villages, yea, your Houses are replenished with those of our Profession, only your Temples we leave to your selves, so that unless we were taught rather to be killed then to kill, we might, and that without Armies assail you: but the true Christian is Enemy to no Man living, much less to his Prince, whom he knows to be ordained of his God, in which respect, he Loveth, Reverenceth, and Honoureth him, we give honour to our King, then (said they) so far as is Lawful for us, and Expedient for him.

More Notes taken out of the Mirroure of the Martyrs of the Sayings of others.

Pag. 320. **W**illiam Thorp said, Truth hath these Properties, that where-ever it is Opposed, yet it gives a sweet Smell; and the more the Enemies Resist, the greater sweet Savour cometh thereof; which Heavenly Smell will not vanish away like Smoke in the Wind, but will descend and rest in some Clean Soul that thirsteth thereafter.

Pag. 317.] Kilian, a Dutch Schoolmaster (to such as askt him, if he loved not his Wife and Children) said, Yes; if all the World were Gold, I would give it to live with them, though it were but in a Prison; yet is my Soul and my Lord Christ Dearer to me than all things whatsoever.

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 ...broken Legs suffer a him not to flee suffering.
 ...Town will not so dear to him as his Wife and
 ...for sake them all clear fully.
 ...Page 300. ... Marshall said, From Eternal he was a Sheep destined to the slaugh-
 ...the ... the Shambles. Gold must be tried.
 ...Page 300. Said one, Thou mayst wear my Body down, but my Soul mounts upwards.
 ...said I will offend my Soul; when your Torments do my Body.
 ...being at the Stake said, I see the Heavens opened: and beholding the
 ...said the Harveſt. Lord, send thy Labourers.
 ...Page 302. ... being solicited by certain Confessors to consider of Liberty and
 ...life, and defendible his Religion; answered, In so holy a cause there need no
 ...Deliberation.
 ...Page 303. ... said, ... must have his due, and Caesar his. He said,
 ...He must give his Sould to God, and all that belongs thereunto.
 ...Page 308. ... being ... suffer Death with his two Sons, said these
 ...words, Sheep were for the Slaughter. This is a New Thing.
 ...Page 304. ... whom the Emperor Julian employed to persecute the
 ...Christians, saw how they were carried through their Sufferings, and that their
 ...Country nothing prevailed, he gave his Reason to the Emperor, That if he dealt
 ...with them, it would turn to their Glory, but his Shame.
 ...Page 304. ... Brown (said ...) you have seen before me many a time and oft, and
 ...I have travelled with thee to witness thee ... Errors, yet thou and such like have and do
 ...report, that I cannot seek thy Blood. Yes, my Lord (said Brown), ye be a bloody-
 ...lucker indeed.
 ...Page 305. ... said to one, ... BLOODY BONNER: ...
 ...but you have a Delight in burning ... but if I

Page 23. Roger Clark said, Fight for your God? for he hath not long to continue.
 Page 262. Robert Coe being demanded by the Bishop of Norwich, Whether he
 would Obey the King's Laws? Answered, As far as they agree with God's Word I will
 Obey them. The Bishop said, Whether they Agree or not Agree with God's Word, we
 be bound to Obey them, though the King were an Infidel. Coe said, If Shedrech, Me-
 shech and Abednego had sordone, Nebuchadnezzar had not Confessed the True God.
 Roger Holand spake in the Spirit of Prophecy concerning the Powers in his Age,
 tells them, Their Authority was from God; and that by his Sufferings they did Persecute
 them; but this (saith he) I dare be bold to say, which by his Spirit I am MOVED to
 speak, God will shorten your Hand of Cruelty. Which did so come to pass.

Cardinal Woolsey's Testimony about PRINTING, and his Lamentation to the POPE

THE very Art of PRINTING was at the first thought Dangerous, because
 it was looked on as a thing like to introduce several Opinions in Religion;
 Cardinal Woolsey, in a Letter of his to the Pope, hath this Passage about it. That his
 Holiness could not be ignorant what divers Effects the New Invention of Printing had pro-
 duced; for as it had brought in and restored Books and Learning, so together it hath been
 the Occasion of these Sects and Schisms, which daily appeared in the World, but chiefly in
 Germany, where men begin now to call in question the present Faith and Tenents of the
 Church, and to examin how far Religion is departed from its primitive Institution; and
 that which particularly was most to be lamented, they had exhorted Lay and Ordinary Men to
 Read the Scriptures, and to Pray in their vulgar Tongue; that if this were suffered, besides
 all other Dangers the common People at last might come to believe, that there was not so much
 use of the Clergy; for if men were perswaded once they could make their own way to God,
 and that Prayers in their Native and Ordinary Language might pierce Heaven as well as in
 Latin, how much would the Authority of the Mass fall! how prejudicial might this prove
 unto all our Ecclesiastical Orders loved! Harbert, Hist. of Hen. 8.

THE END.

